

Appendix C

California Coastal Commission Concurrence

CALIFORNIA COASTAL COMMISSION

48 FRIEMONT STREET, SUITE 3000
SAN FRANCISCO, CA 94102-3218
VOICE AND TDD (415) 904-4300



June 14, 1999

Jim Wangler
PD18E Chief Engineer
Department of the Navy
Space and Naval Warfare Systems Command
4301 Pacific Highway
San Diego, CA 92110-3127

RE: ND-55-99 Negative Determination, Navy, Plasma Sound Source acoustic testing,
four nautical miles offshore of Camp Pendleton Marine Corps Base, San Diego Co.

Dear Mr. Wangler:

The Coastal Commission staff has received the above-referenced negative determination for the testing of an active Navy acoustic system called the Plasma Sound Source (PSS). The test location is four miles offshore of Camp Pendleton Marine Corps Base. The tests would involve 56 hours of active acoustics over an 8-day period. The PSS array would consist of a 10 meter long string of 80 sparkplug-like devices, which produce split second broadband impulsive sounds. The vertical array would be deployed in 80 meters of water (in an area with a total ocean depth of 91 meters). In addition, a passive, horizontal array would be deployed nearby on the ocean floor. All equipment would be removed from the marine environment at the conclusion of the test period. The tests would occur between mid-August and the end of September 1999.

The primary issue of concern is the potential effects of the sound source on marine resources, particularly marine mammals. The maximum sound level would be 219 decibels (dB), water standard^{1,2}. The frequency range would be 300 - 650 Hertz (Hz), and the pulse duration would be 2.5 milliseconds (ms) (with varying times between pulses, from 15 seconds to days).

The impacts of the proposed testing would be localized and short term. The Navy has committed to avoid exposing any marine mammals to sound intensities above 175 dB (re: 1 μ Pa). Using the standard spherical spreading model ($20 \log R$), this sound intensity would occur at 160 meters from the source, and, to provide an additional margin/buffer, the Navy has committed to avoiding exposure to marine mammals for a distance of 200 m from the source. The Navy will perform visual monitoring by trained marine mammal specialists (with at least two observers at all times); operations will be curtailed when any

¹ Re 1 μ Pa³-sec

² The Navy notes that this level: "Corresponds to a source level of 190 dB re 1 μ Pa³/Hz spectrum level below 1 kHz."

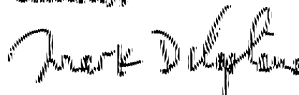
mysticetes, pinnipeds or odontocetes are within 200 meters of the source. Active acoustics will be limited to daylight hours, and operations will also be curtailed during low-visibility conditions. The project will be conducted outside the gray whale migration season.

The Navy has coordinated with the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), which has concluded that with the monitoring and avoidance commitments the activity would not involve any "take" or harassment of marine mammals.

The project site is not near any known recreational diving sites; the nearest known dive site is approximately 5 miles away. The Navy has committed to: (1) posting a Coast Guard Notice to Mariners advising boaters of the activity; and (2) avoiding effects on divers by monitoring diving activity within one kilometer of the source and avoiding exposing divers to any sound levels that could raise concerns.

Given the project's location outside (seaward of) the coastal zone, combined with the short term nature of the tests and the avoidance measures the Navy has incorporated into it, the project would not affect any environmentally sensitive habitat or marine resources, public access and recreation, or any other coastal resources. Therefore, we agree with your conclusion that the project would not adversely affect coastal zone resources, and we hereby concur with your negative determination for this project made pursuant to 15 CFR Section 930.35(d) of the NOAA implementing regulations. Please contact Mark Delaplaine at (415) 904-5289 if you have any questions.

Sincerely,



(for) PETER M. DOUGLAS
Executive Director

cc: San Diego Area Office
NOAA
Assistant Counsel for Ocean Services
OCRM
California Department of Water Resources
Governors Washington D.C. Office
NMFS (Christina Fahy)